2: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1956
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lack of appetite, forgetfulness, sweating. These manifestations could take place in childhood, around puberty, or when the man was fully grown, though the most usual age was in the late teens. The symptoms culminated in sharp pains and a prolonged collapse, and after that a deep sleep. It was then that the dreams came giving the man the assurance that he was henceforth a medium, and that through the spirit of his grandfather, or whoever was now appearing to him, he could communicate with the spirit world. At this time also he was told in dreams where to find medicines and what to do with them. A constant feature in the initiation of well known and accredited diviners was that they knew the name and identity of the spirit with whom they were in contact, and it appeared to be always someone related to them and most often their father's father.

As they returned to normality from an experience which was frightening in its intensity, it dawned on them that they now had to practise as a diviner, to make use of the powers which had come to them. There was evidence that they accepted this role with reluctance. Their relatives, when they saw them going through the earlier stages, were aware that there was an inevitable sequel, that of practising as a diviner, and they too shared the reluctance of the man himself. Sometimes a diviner began to practise by associating as a junior partner with a successful practitioner; sometimes he began hesitantly by himself. The criterion of the validity of their calling was their success. No one seemed to know what became of diviners who were unsuccessful and never became accredited. They apparently disappeared from the field because no one employed them.

The diviners whom I met and talked with, as well as those few whom I saw practising their calling, were considered by the Ngoni to possess a distinctive temperament. It was evident that they wished to live somewhat apart, and that they were withdrawn in a social as well as in a spatial sense. They married, but usually only one wife, and had children, but played little part in extended family or village affairs. Their huts were always on the outskirts of villages and were neither large and prosperous nor very poor looking. They had a reputation for being unpunctual and forgetful, but they were far from being unobservant. Part of their skill lay in watching people and learning about their concerns from observation and storing events in a good memory. Though they could work themselves up into emotionally excited states during a consultation, at other times they gave the impression of being controlled, rather quiet, detached, and uninfluenced by the currents of talk and opinion around them.

The rewards for their services were in kind as a rule, and could be articles of household equipment, food, cloth, and sometimes European clothes or goods from the stores, such as lanterns, soap, matches and cigarettes. There appeared to be no bargaining over payment. The

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939) 1960
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answers to them somewhere, then there have been some vital omissions in the narrative.

Clues to this study

In relating this study to other field studies and analyses of socialization techniques and processes, I have not attempted to present here any general assessment of similar or related studies, much less any review of the field as a whole, since I have touched on both in earlier publications.[1] Instead I have brought into this chapter one or two clues or guide lines from other sources which seemed to me to elucidate some of my problems, particularly in regard to four main aspects of this study, which have already been mentioned in Chapter I and which to a large extent set the limits and determine the emphases of this book. The 'true Ngoni' were a society within a society, a distinct cultural group within the Ngoni kingdom. This society of theirs had sharp edges, definable and recognizable limits, and that partly accounted for their own awareness of themselves as distinct from, though at so many points connected with, the neighbouring peoples. Their culture, that is their way of living within this society, had definite values which they strove to maintain, and this was one of the reasons why the ideal Ngoni personality pattern, and their endeavour to see it reproduced in each child, was easy to recognize. In order to safeguard their society and maintain their culture they exercised a fairly rigid social control over the upbringing of their children, which resulted in something approaching a 'system' of training and educating children. Set against this conservation of traditional values however was the reality and extent of changes due to external circumstances mentioned at the end of Chapter I. In the face of these changes the Ngoni showed that they could adapt some of them to their own purposes, and they made use of the schools, for example, once they approved of them, to help adjust their

[1] See Appendix (i)

3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
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of cloth hanging in front from a bead or grass waistband. They were all taught before that age, and most stringently after it, to sit correctly. For the little girls, this meant kneeling first and then sitting with the legs tucked on one side. They always smoothed down their scrap of cloth so that their genitals were covered. Little boys often squatted, sitting on their heels. Their correct position however, especially when eating food, was to sit with their legs crossed and the soles of their feet pressed against their thighs, and their cloth or skin apron arranged to cover their genitals.

Any rudeness in speech or action towards parents or elders was corrected at once, and the child was told: 'That is not the Ngoni way.' Studied courtesy included looking down when addressed by an elder, and as we saw in Chapter II, never walking behind a group of elders but passing in front of them, bending slightly forward and murmuring: 'I am before your eyes.'

Play places and playthings

In spite of what appeared like a somewhat restrictive régime, Ngoni children were merry and busy all their waking hours. Occasionally lack of health, or an awkward temperament, produced a child who sat around by himself, or glowered at other children, or was spiteful and vindictive. For the most part their nurse girls and older sisters paid them the attention they demanded, were always ready to provide distractions and amusements, and showed them how to use all that lay around them as playthings.

The places where they played depended on their age and mobility. The youngest children stayed round the hut and inside the fence. Occasionally the nurse girls and older sisters in the afternoons took them to a 'playground' on the outskirts of the village, where the older girls were accustomed to meet and practise dancing, or to thread beads and chatter. When the harvest was in, some of the older children about five and six years old, helped by the nurse girls, made 'play

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VILLAGE LIFE FOR OLDER BROTHERS AND SISTERS

The youngest boys were not expected to herd cattle until they were ten or eleven years old. Their work was to look after the calves, sheep and goats, sometimes following the cattle to the grazing ground, sometimes wandering round the edge of the village, avoiding the cultivated areas until after harvest. At that time cattle, calves, sheep and goats were driven into the stubble and left to forage.

As a result of dormitory life, combined with cattle-herding, a definite ideal herd-boy personality developed. This was fostered by the hero-worship of the older herd-boys by the young ones. It was also built up by the praise or blame meted out for herding well or badly by the older herd-boys to younger ones, and by the cattle-owners. This 'ideal herdsman' was used by Ngoni ministers and teachers living in the villages to relate their teaching about Christianity to the life around them. Prayers near the kraal, conducted by an Ngoni minister each evening, or before people went on a journey, often began with the words 'Jesus our shepherd, keep us well'. Young teachers often said to me how they always listened as boys when a prayer began like this, and that in school their favourite Bible story was that of David the herd-boy.

When there was a school in the village or near by which the Ngoni elders approved of, the herd-boys had a busy life. They watered the cattle very early, took them to graze and milked them. Then they went to school from ten to two, taking the cattle out grazing afterwards. In the cold weather they went to school from six to ten and herded cattle the rest of the day, after the sun had dried the dew off the grass. School attendance depended on the attitude of fathers to the new learning, and how the village elders regarded the local mission and its teachers. The boys whose fathers had no cattle, in general the non-Ngoni elements in the village, were free to attend school continuously since they had no herding responsibilities. There was some jeering among the boys in the dormitory at those who only went to school and did not

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572 than dissolved. The element of secrecy in the confidence exchanged gave the girls a much-needed sense of privacy, and the freedom of being able to say anything to the friend was a relief from the constant guard on speech and manners.

535 The girls had dance-groups, and practised dancing in or near a compound. Each group had an 'owner' who called
571 the others together and organized the dancing. These were several dance-groups, in contrast with the boys' single group,
[578] and the girls' groups were often rent by internal quarrels, leading to splits in the groups.

865 The dance-groups, and other little knots of girls, often had violent quarrels in which all their latent aggression came to the surface. They shouted at each other, scratched each other's faces and burst into tears of anger and frustration. If senior Ngoni women were around when these scenes took place, they generally broke in and rebuked the 'owner' of the group and sent them all home. Sometimes they deliberately turned their backs, leaving the girls to fight it out among themselves, or hoping the 'owner' would restore order. The senior women, rather unobtrusively as a rule, kept an eye on the girls in their dance-groups and at other times, and were adept at summing up their characters and looking out for signs of leadership and of ability to control others.

● 157 One type of leadership was often shown when a girl collect-
538 ed younger children together, for singing, games or for tell-
555 ing stories in a recitative form with a refrain in which the others joined. There was a certain kind of skill in reciting these stories, recognized alike by the children listening and by adults watching from a distance. The Ngoni believed that this skill was due to a gift for eloquence, not so far removed from the eloquence of the man who chanted the praises of the chiefs, or the man who composed his own songs. This eloquence was said to come 'from the chest'. Ngoni men and women passing a group of children spellbound at the recital of a story would say: 'Ha! look at that one. She has that which is of the chest—real eloquence.'

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VIII

Personality and Character

Personality, culture and character

128 The threads of teaching and learning whose ends were grasped in Chapter II have been followed through the intervening five chapters, and our task now is to see what pattern they have made of the system of training given by the Ngoni to their children. The threads have eventually been twisted together to form two separate but linked strands, one the 121 achievement of the Ngoni basic personality and the other the development of individual character. In this chapter I am going to use personality in the sense derived from Linton and Kluckhohn, namely the sum total of the traits which are desired by a society and form part of its culture, and which are instilled into children in the system of training set up by the society. Personality therefore since it is regarded as an aim in child training is a social product. The ideal personality is held up to the growing generation, not so much as a total achievement, but as the acquisition of a number of traits of behaviour, skills and knowledge. The Ngoni basic personality [157] therefore consisted of common personality elements in adults, [155] which, as Kluckhohn says, were largely a product of learning, and that learning was directed and controlled by the system of training. Character on the other hand I am going to use as the sum total of the individual's response to his training. It therefore includes his personal adjustment to the training given by the society, and, as a result, his acquiring of some or many of the basic personality traits, and hence the degree of his approximation to the ideal personality. Over and above

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parents and the community, the children and the community, and the community and the school. There are a number of clues to follow in examining the different groups of people involved in a child's growing up, and discovering some kind of consistent pattern of relationship between them. The clues are not difficult to trace for they begin in such information as the amount of time a child spends with each group, what he learns from each group, how much authority and responsibility the group assumes for him, and so on. In this analysis it is not enough to relate each group to the children. It is important too to be aware of the personal relations between parents, relatives, community, school authorities, in terms of their opportunities for mutual contact and discussion, and their attitude towards culture change and cultural conservation. Out of such potential contacts arise the formulation of aims for home and school training, and their harmony or their conflict, and the resultant effects on the growing up of a child.

These two lines to be followed up, which we have just indicated, are familiar to most teachers and to many parents. The third line arising out of this study, and common to most other studies of growing up, is related to research on personality and culture and on national character. This field of studies is more controversial and more complex than the former. In the case of the Ngoni they had a more or less distinct ideal personality rooted in their culture and answering the question: what kind of people are the Ngoni and how do they want others to regard them? This ideal personality was the goal of their child-training as described in this book, but it was in the process of being modified by school teaching, by Christian teaching, and perhaps more profoundly still by the growth of Nyasaland African nationalism. The sharp outlines of the ideal personality type of Ngoni men and women were already blurred by these political and educational developments.

For readers of this book the relevance of this aspect of

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157 Ngoni children's growing up is probably to call attention to cultural and national influences in emphasizing certain qualities in the ideal personality and in individual character.

121 In general, in the west, cultural influences determining a way of life, and setting standards for individual behaviour are found in certain kinds of 'class' grouping, or in the environmental determinants of rural communities, 'new' towns and housing estates, slum or suburban areas. Very few western societies can show their children the sharp outline of an ideal personality which seemed so important and compelling to the Ngoni. Nevertheless behind parents' attempts to train their children or to direct their growing up lie as a rule some vague ideas about ideal personality traits or the qualities to be looked for in national character. Perhaps some searching into these fundamental motives, stimulated by this Ngoni study, could help to bring them to the surface and so assist in the harmonizing of educational aims.